

colleague from Missouri is anxious to catch his plane also.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, if I could impose and ask for 2 minutes, so that Senator CRAIG and myself will consume a total of 5 minutes on this side.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Hearing no objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, I am so honored to be on the floor with Senator JOE LIEBERMAN today and listen to his remarks, and frankly, to stand in the shadow of his leadership on this issue. Because he has been that, a bipartisan leader recognizing, as he so appropriately has spoke, the leadership role that a Congress should take at this time in our Nation's history. And he has said it well, it is not one of micro-management, it is not 1 of 535 generals all thinking we can act strategically and tactically about the engagement currently underway in Baghdad and elsewhere across Iraq.

It is our job, I would hope, to stand united in behalf of the men and women we send there in uniform to accomplish what we so hope and wish they will be able to accomplish and that is the stability of Iraq and the greater Middle East and allowing the Iraqi people to lead their country and remove from it the kind of radical Islamic fascism that is well underway and dominating the region.

Let me make a few comments this afternoon that clearly coincide with what Senator LIEBERMAN spoke to. This is not, nor should it ever become, a partisan issue and I think Senator LIEBERMAN's presence on the floor this afternoon speaks volumes to just that, that this is not a partisan issue. This is a phenomenally important national and international issue for our country to be engaged in. Frankly, few countries can engage in this struggle in that way we have, and with the kind of energy and strength that we have brought to it.

The majority leader has put us in a very precarious situation, one that is clearly divisive. Frankly, I can say things as a Republican that maybe my colleague cannot say. I believe that the majority leader is playing politics on the issue of calling up a nonbinding resolution, while blocking the minority from calling up a different resolution. My good friend Senator GREGG has introduced a bill, a bill that I have cosponsored, that would express our full support for our soldiers in harms way and give them a much needed guarantee that they will continue to receive the funding they need to continue to function in their critical mission. As I said, the majority leader refuses to allow us a vote on this bill, and I think that is plain wrong.

Let me make it very clear, it is not the Republicans stalling or shutting down debate on the issue of Iraq. In fact, it is just the opposite. I have spoken twice in the last 2 weeks about this issue because I believe it is very critical, both to my constituency in

Idaho, but also to our great Nation and the world. The majority claims that they want full and fair debate on this issue, yet they refuse to allow us to bring our own voice to this issue, and our own resolutions. How can we have a full and fair debate and vote on the floor of the Senate if we are being held hostage by the majority leader?

No State goes untouched by what we do here today and no man or woman in uniform goes untouched. Twenty Idahoans have given their lives in Iraq, and each of their sacrifices is sacred and honored, not just by their families and friend but by all. Most recently, SPC Ross Clevenger and PVT Raymond Werner of Boise, and SGT James Holtom of Rexberg were killed in Iraq in an IED attack. They, like all those who have fallen to enemy hands, served in a heroic and gallant way for a cause they believed in and a cause that we believe in. That is the cause of freedom.

Senator LIEBERMAN said it well, for us to send one of our top generals and top military minds in GEN David Petraeus to Iraq and say by a unanimous vote that we support him and believe in his abilities, but at the same time we do not support his mission, what are we saying as a Congress? What kind of message are we sending to our men and women in uniform when we speak in that manner? I think it is wrong to send this message and I will vigorously oppose that message.

If the majority leader and his Democratic colleagues believe so strongly that our mission in Iraq is so flawed, then why do we not see them bringing to the floor a bill to cut off funding for our troops on the ground in Iraq? As I mentioned earlier, the answer to that is a political answer, not a substance issue. Many Democrats have already called for cutting off funding and demanding an immediate withdrawal from Iraq, yet we have not seen those bills being taken up on the floor of either chamber. However, there are rumors that Members will choose to use the upcoming Iraq supplemental funding bill to force the President to take the advice of these congressional generals, rather than using the advice of our military experts and commanders to execute our mission and secure Iraq.

The reason I do not support such an immediate withdrawal of our troops, or cutting funding off for our troops in gun fights right now in the streets of Baghdad, is simple. I believe in our mission and I believe that our soldiers are the most capable in the world. The only enemy that can defeat American soldiers on the battlefield is the low morale of the American people. A resolution condemning their actions and their mission in Iraq is just the kind of defeat that could embolden our enemies and harm our soldiers.

As every one of my colleagues knows, the reinforcements we are debating are already in motion. In fact, the President's plan to stabilize Baghdad and Anbar Province are already showing

signs of success. The Iraqi government is closing down their borders with Syria and Iran, a critical decision that will limit the number of foreign fighters and enemy weapons from entering Iraq, weapons that are being used to kill American soldiers.

Lastly, I would say that our presence in Iraq does not just affect Iraq. The greater Middle East and the security of world are at stake. Are we going to turn a blind eye to Iraq and allow it to become a safe haven for terrorists the way that Afghanistan was under the Taliban regime? I certainly will do all that I can as a U.S. Senator to prevent that from happening because it is in our national interests to defeat our enemies abroad before they can strike us again here at home.

RURAL SCHOOL FUNDING

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, let me speak to you briefly regarding another critical issue and that is the Secure Rural Schools and Communities Self-Determination Reauthorization Act.

When we return after our Presidents Day recess, it is vital we re-engage in a critical issue for timber dependent school districts in Idaho and across our country. This bill once referred to as Craig/Wyden, helped many rural school districts move through a difficult time in their history and school children now find themselves in a very difficult situation. As you may know, many rural schools in this country have funding tied directly to timber harvest from our public lands. For several reasons, we haven't harvested timber at our historical rate and our rural schools in those particular counties have suffered.

I am working in a bipartisan way with my colleagues from Montana, Oregon, Washington, California, New Mexico and of course Idaho. We all see the importance of continuing this funding to some extent. I am committed, as is Senator WYDEN, to ensuring the success of the bill that bears our name.

It is my intent, as well as others, to redefine the formula. Our key dates to shape this critical issue are the Energy and Natural Resources hearing scheduled for March 1; as well as the emergency appropriations supplemental debate tentatively scheduled for the middle of March.

The timing is at a critical point. Our timber-dependent county officials and school districts are wrestling with budgets that are tied to this funding. I say today, clearly, failure is not an option.

I yield the floor.

IRANIAN WEAPONS AND IRAQ RESOLUTIONS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Senator BOND.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from Virginia, truly a Virginia gentlemen and a good friend and a leader. I am most grateful.